All glories to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga

Home Comfort

6th Printing

An Introduction to Spiritual Life

Parts One to Four of this booklet were compiled from informal discourses given by

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Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

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About the Author

Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj is a veteran ascetic preceptor of the original traditional saintly succession ordained by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and he is the founder Ācāryya of the holy temple of pure devotion in Nabadwip, West Bengal, India, known as the Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh. Established by Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj in 1941, this sacred place of worship has become the gem of pilgrimage for devotees the world over who are true aspirants for gaining entry into the divine land of surrender unto the Absolute Good. His spiritual representation is hailed throughout the annals of spiritual India, not only for his encyclopaedic command of the revealed Scriptures, but for his undisputed acumen as a bona fide commentator of the archives of scriptural treasures which were revealed by the venerable saintly preceptors of the East. He is an unprecedented oracle who draws out the inner meaning and substance of the Scriptures in an ever-progressive, expanding, dynamic, and living conception.

In 1985, three years prior to his departure from this mortal world, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj fulfilled a personal heart's desire he had cherished for over forty years: he conferred the holy order of *sannyāsa* upon his most beloved, confidential, and most senior associate-servitor, Śrīmad Bhakti Sundar Govinda Mahārāj. Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj, ever renowned for his keen intellect and spiritual foresight, could envisage the grave necessities of his mission in the future. He therefore named Śrīmad B.S. Govinda Mahārāj as his successor Ācāryya-President for his own *Maṭh,* Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, and its affiliated branches.

Foreword to the First Edition

I am feeling very fortunate to have come within the personal association of Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj, our Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, and now to have this chance to introduce this introduction booklet. Throughout his whole life Śrīla Guru Mahārāj practised what he preached. The sincere practitioners are themselves an introduction to the subject of genuine, joyful, spiritual life, but they are not able to visit everyone personally. Therefore we are taking the opportunity afforded by the modern scientific age in order to print books to broadcast widely such wisdom. The vibration emanating from a printing press in this way can beneficially influence not only this mundane world, but it can even conquer souls already established in the spiritual plane. It is therefore very joyful and satisfying to see the manifestation of this publication, *Home Comfort—An Introduction to Inner Fulfilment.* It is a selection from our Divine Master's lectures introducing the subject of theistic spiritual life, and, for the service of his Divine Mission, it has been reproduced in print-form by the sincere efforts of the student practitioners here.

Up until his last days in this mundane plane Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would bestow his mercy upon the conditioned souls in the form of lectures which he would sometimes deliver continuously hour after hour. From his example we can understand the injunction of the Scriptures that until our last breath we must try to practise service to the transcendental service world—and give that same opportunity to others.

If anyone will carefully read this booklet with sincerity, he must be benefitted and receive inspiration, as well as the opportunity, to reach towards that life of true inner fulfilment.

Humbly,
Swāmī B.S. Govinda
Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh
8 February 1992

PART ONE

Please listen attentively to what I shall explain. In a scientific way I shall try to explain the subject to you, in general, independent of all religious conceptions.

First of all we are to understand that there are three planes of life: the plane of mundane enjoyment, the plane of renunciation, and the plane of dedication. The plane of enjoyment is where we are at present, more or less. Mundane enjoyment means exploitation; and without exploitation, none can exist in this plane:

ahastāni sahastānāṁ
apadāni catuṣpadām
laghuni tatra mahatāṁ
jīvo jīvasya jīvanam

"Those that have hands live on those who have no hands. Four-footed animals live on grass, creepers, etc. and the big live on the small." Everything is full of life: creepers, grass, and trees also have life, but without exploitation none can maintain their body here.

This is the plane of exploitation, and, as Newton's third law says, to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. By exploitation one takes a loan, and to clear that loan he will have to go down. In this

Mundane enjoyment means exploitation, and is reactionary

way, there are so many *jīvas* (souls) going up and down, up and down due to action and reaction in the plane of exploitation. Society is trying to exploit to the utmost; everywhere there is the attempt to live at the cost of others. Without it life is impossible in this area because this is the plane of exploitation.

The Buddhists, the Jains, the followers of Śaṅkara, and so many others are trying to get out of this entanglement of exploitation and to find a life where there is no exploitation, no action and reaction. To avoid action and reaction they

Renunciation is like dreamless sleep, but we are to awaken to the search for the Centre

try to find a position of renunciation, and they come to a conception similar to dreamless sleep, that of *samādhi:* to withdraw completely from the objective world and to remain in the subjective plane. Without allowing their feelings to move into the lower plane, they always keep a subjective position, and that is something like dreamless sleep.

The *Vaiṣṇava* section—those who serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead—are of the opinion that there is another world, the world of dedication. That dedication is just the opposite of exploitation. In the mundane plane every unit wants to exploit the environment, but in the plane of dedication, every unit wants to serve the environment; and not only the environment, but the real key to the life of that plane is to serve the Centre. We are living in an organic whole, so every point must be true to the organic Centre. The explanation is given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by the analogy of serving the root of a tree:

yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-
bhujopaśākhāḥ
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇāṁ
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā

In the Vedic literature also, we find it said, "Try to find the one by knowing whom everything is known:"

yasmin jñāte sarvvamidaṁ
vijñātaṁ bhavati
yasmin prāpte sarvvamidaṁ
prāptaṁ bhavati
tad vijijñāsasva tadeva brahma

There is a central point by knowing which, everything is known, by attaining which everything is attained. The long and short of the entire Vedic advice is to try to find out that Centre. Therefore try to find

out that Centre. In the beginning some may think this to be a ludicrous claim: "By knowing one, everything is known, by getting one, everything is got—what is this? Only a madman can say such a thing!" So, an analogy is given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:* when you pour water onto the root of a tree, the whole tree is fed, and if you put food into the stomach, the whole body is fed, similarly, if you do service to the Centre, everything is served. It *is* possible, and to do that, means to enter the plane of dedication. Avoiding the plane of exploitation, and also that of renunciation, try to enter the plane of dedication. Your *ātmā*, your soul proper, is a member of that plane. That is the real world, whereas this is the perverted reflection.

The real world is where every unit is dedicating itself to the whole, represented by the Centre, just as in a healthy body every atom will work for the welfare of the whole body. If an atom works for itself, it exploits to the extreme, and such local works for local interest are clearly bad. Every part of the body, and every atom, is to work for the welfare of the whole system. There *is* a Centre, and by the guidance of that it will work.

The Prime Cause is by itself and for itself

What is the position of the Centre? It is mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā,*

sarvva-dharmmān parityajya,
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
(Bg. 18.66)

Kṛṣṇa explains His position: "Abandon all *dharmmas* (duties) and just surrender unto Me."

Now I want to represent this conception from another standpoint.

Hegel was a good German philosopher and his philosophy is known as perfectionism. He has given an idea: the Absolute Truth, the Prime Cause of everything, must have two qualifications. What are they? It must be *by itself* and *for itself.*

The Absolute is His own cause and He exists only to satisfy Himself

Please try to pay attention. *By itself* means that He is His own cause—nothing else created Him. If anything has created Him, that creator will have the primary importance. Therefore, to be the Absolute He must be *anādi,* eternally existing and not created by anything. The Absolute must have this qualification.

The next qualification is that the Absolute Truth is *for itself.* He exists for His own satisfaction, not to satisfy any other. If His existence is to satisfy another entity, then He will be secondary, and they for whose satisfaction He is living will have the prime position.

Therefore, the Absolute must have these two qualifications: He is His own cause, and He exists only to satisfy Himself, to fulfil His own purpose. The Absolute is by itself and for itself. If any straw moves, it moves to fulfil the purpose of the Absolute. Everything—every incident, and whatever happens—must have to be for His satisfaction. So the real current is His *līlā,* His Pastimes, but ourselves we are guided by separate interest: family interest or country interest or social interest or humanitarianism, etc. But in the infinite consideration it is all only a tiny part, and we are all engaged in acting for such separate interest. There is a clash between innumerable separate interests and so there is trouble. But we must leave all our so-called special interests, come out from misunderstanding, and try to attain the function of a unit active for the cause of the whole.

The conclusion of *Bhagavadgītā* given by Kṛṣṇa is *"Sarvvadharmmān parityajya*—Give up all your duties which you think at present you have to discharge, and—*mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*—surrender to My feet."

ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

"I shall release you from all the troubles of which you can ever conceive."

In other words you are to remember to be faithful to the Centre. At present all your respective duties are for local interest, but give up the local identification of your own interest and merge totally in the interest of the organic whole.

We see that if a police officer takes even three rupees for his own purpose, he is punished, but if he kills so many for the interest of the country, he is rewarded. Similarly, whatever is done for the satisfaction of the whole is good, but if you do anything for yourself or any local friend, you will have to be punished. In an industry, we have no right to take a bribe for our personal purpose, at the same time we have no right to call a strike, to close down the labour force, for then the industry will be destroyed.

Neither exploitation nor renunciation will do. Exploitation is clearly bad, and because we have no right to go on strike, renunciation is also bad. In an organic whole the common interest is that everyone must be dedicated to the Centre, and to the Centre means to the whole. When we put food into the stomach, the stomach will distribute it properly to every

We are parts of the whole universe, and our duty is to work for the benefit of the whole

corner according to its necessity. That sort of life is *Vaiṣṇavism.* There is an organic whole, and we are a part of that. We have our special duties in connection with the whole, and that is proper dedication for the whole. We are not to put food into the eye, or into the nose, or the ear, or anywhere except the stomach, then only will it be distributed properly and the whole organism will be healthy. All of us are parts of the whole universe, and our duty is to work for the

Affection, love, harmony, and beauty constitute the nature of the Prime Cause

whole, and that is devotion, dedication, surrender. And how are we to know about that? We will receive help from the revealed Scriptures, and from the many saints and agents who are also coming from that plane to bring us into harmony.

The religion of highest harmony has been given by Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadev who explained devotion on the basis of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the book which is understood to be the real conclusion of all the revealed Scriptures. In this way He explained that energy or power is not the highest thing, but knowledge is above it. Knowledge can control power and give a beneficial result, but further, knowledge itself also holds a lower position: above it is love and affection, and that is the highest. Neither knowledge nor power, but only affection can give us fulfilment of life.

Mercy is higher than justice. Justice only exists where there is the necessity of laws, rules, etc., but in the realm of the Absolute Autocrat, who is the Absolute Good, there can be no question of any apprehension about Him. He is Absolute Good, and Absolute Good is Absolute Love and Affection, and that is home! Back to God, back to home. What is home? It is where we find that we are in the midst of our well-wishers. If we do not care for our own benefit, then there are so many who will take care of us—in fact the whole environment will take care of us—and that is home. That is the domain of the Absolute, and we can enter into His service, the highest position, and thereby see the affection, love, harmony, and beauty that exist there. All these qualities are similar and they constitute the nature of the Prime Cause and Good, and we are to go there.

Misusing our free-will we

have been somehow led astray but now we are being called, "Come home, back to God and back to home, the highest position, the land of love." This is, in general and in short, the sum total which I have presented to you—this is the Kṛṣṇa conception in *Bhagavad-gītā* and in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* and it is the conception that has been given by Śrī Chaitanyadev. This Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh and the whole of the Gauḍīya Mission is preaching only for that. "Go to the Centre, use your life for total dedication to the Centre, and the Centre is all above justice. It is all-merciful, affectionate, loving, and beautiful."

This is a general background of *Vaiṣṇava* religion, of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and a brief history of all conceptions of religion—that is, exploitation, renunciation, and dedication are the three planes of life, and the soul proper is a member of the land of dedication. All are dedicating units but somehow, by misusing their partial free-will, they have entered into the world of exploitation. Buddha, Jain, Pareśanāth and others have helped those who want to withdraw from here, to get out of the entanglement of exploitation—of action and reaction—

Only by misusing our free-will have we entered this plane of exploitation

by complete retirement. They have said that after retirement, the soul can live happily. Still, there may be the possibility of again becoming entangled in this trap, but where the really free souls live, all are dedicating units, and when we want to trace what is harmonising them and maintaining them in that plane we shall see that all are working for the whole, and the whole is represented by the one Absolute Good. We are to see all these things, and for this the human birth is very valuable. In connection with the *sādhus*—

We are residents in the world of solids, but the higher plane is of quite a different nature

the saints, the agents—we shall try our best to get out of this entanglement and enter into the land of love, dedication, and affection.

We have already published several books, and there are many old scriptures which also help us understand properly and in a more detailed way about all ontological aspects of religion.

PART TWO

Our home is full of freedom, more comfort—everything. It is a place where there is a natural transaction of faith, love, affection, etc. It is inconceivable. The *Upaniṣads* say, "Don't venture to test the unthinkable plane with your reasoning. That plane really is beyond the capacity of your thought. It is under a different set of laws. Your mathematical calculations and conclusions in this world are acquainted with points, planes, and solids. At present you are a man in the world of solids, and you have some limited association with planes and points in a somewhat abstract way, therefore how can you calculate about higher things of which you have no knowledge? The ways of living and the laws of that country are all unknown to you, so you cannot try to debate about that. That plane is of quite a different nature."

If your understanding is limited to the laws of water, then how can you calculate about air? Similarly if you are familiar only with the laws of air, how can you make any calculation within the sphere of ether? Therefore, don't rush to bring within your experimental laboratory those items which are beyond the capacity of

your thinking, for that will be foolishness.

Higher things do exist, but the general man in this world has no knowledge about them. We are indeed experiencers and have some knowledge, but only to a particular degree and standard. We cannot venture to calculate what is beyond our reach. But if those who actually have experience of that plane will come to us and give us some information, then we can make some comparison: "This gentleman of a particular experience of ether has written in this way, another gentleman who has experience and has also experimented about ether has written in another particular manner." In this way we can gain some understanding from their investigation and their real connection with the subject matter.

In the section of those investigating about telescopes, we can make a comparison of their findings. The experience of one researcher with his telescope is of a certain type and we can also learn about the experience of others with their particular telescopes. With the information available to us from their actual connection with the telescopes and their experiments, we may be able to conclude that perhaps a certain telescope was more

We are to learn of higher things from those who are truly acquainted with them

powerful, another more powerful in a particular field, etc. So, we have some limited capacity to compare what has been discovered beyond our senses by means of the telescope, even though we ourselves may not have a telescope.

The subject of the higher things discovered by the mental "telescope," or soul's "telescope," has been dealt with in the Scriptures. Such subject matter is known by the saints, and we are to take their help in

We need treatment from the specialist for our blindness

order to have entrance within that land. We are not at present in a position to have experience of the higher plane, but later, by the help of the saints and Scriptures, when we shall ourselves have that type of telescope, we will be able to have such higher experience.

sve svehadhikāre yā niṣṭhā
sāgunāḥ parikīrttitāḥ

"To pay attention to your own plane is admirable."

acintyaḥ khalu ye bhāvā
na tāṁs tarkeṇa yojayet

Don't let the argumentative spirit overshadow everything. Argument is not all in all: it is not that it must be the resort of every belief. The spiritual realm is *acintya*, inconceivable, but still we are to try to understand things according to our capacity, faith, and realisation. Above all, we have to accommodate within our mind that sweetness is sweet, and truth is truth, however strong it may be, but we should not take any standard from here and apply it to that higher realm.

If one has no eyes but another can see, the blind man will naturally seek help from the one who has vision. We are also blind to what is within ourselves otherwise what is the necessity of consulting a doctor? The doctor can see what we cannot: he will diagnose and then we will undergo treatment. Naturally we will have respect and will give him something for his assistance—it is not unreasonable.

The Guru is the specialist doctor, and we will understand his qualification when we come to see that what he says is real and not imaginary. Such vision will depend upon the degree of awakenment of the eye. If one who is blind is treated by a capable doctor he will gradually directly perceive, "Yes, I begin to see something. I now have some eye experience." From that time on he won't care for

the speculative opinions of the other blind people, but he will have his direct capacity to see. With the coming of sight he can understand that the application of the medicine has some real effect.

Scientific understanding is also similar. In earlier days when Faraday discovered electricity, many people laughed, "What is this? It is mere curiosity. What utility can we have from this electricity?"

I once read an account of Faraday demonstrating an experiment to show the effect of his discovery. He generated electricity with a machine and then he showed small pieces of paper being moved by that electric current. Many were satisfied to see his new discovery, but then a lady remarked, "But after all this, Mr. Faraday, what practical benefit shall we derive from this luxury play of yours."

Faraday replied, "Madam, please can you tell me what is the utility of a newborn babe?" His point was that when a baby is born we are to take care of him, then, when grown, his energy will be put to work usefully. Similarly, some consider that God consciousness is only a luxury, a fashion, or like playing—that it has no practical application or direct utility.

No one can deny that they want to live happily, properly, and consciously.

But when God consciousness becomes intense, those who experience it will see all other activities, however apparently important, to have no value. Why? Because ultimately we want to live. We don't want to die.

To live is the main necessity and the general necessity of all of us. No one can deny that they want to live, and not only live, but live happily, properly, and consciously. Furthermore, we want to avoid all affliction, misery, etc.

When God consciousness

The mortal world cannot bring true satisfaction; it can only lose our energy

arises within someone, he can see clearly, "Why is everyone engaged in a wild goose chase in this material world? Everyone wants happiness, but all are running after an imaginary phantasmagoria."

Happiness can never be with mortal things. We are making a transaction with the mortal world, but that cannot bring satisfaction; it can only lose our energy. What we collect on one side, disappears on another. A wise man should neither accept nor tolerate this sort of waste of energy as the principle of life. Such a wise person can see another plane of life. He can see that he is not a party to this mortal world which is like a place of playing. He will feel, "I am immortal. I am a member of the eternal world but I have somehow become entangled in this mortal aspect of existence. So, as soon as I can shake off this connection I shall then stand in a normal position." He will find that he himself—the soul, the feeler, the conceiver—is a member of another soil but he has become entangled within this mortal pain-producing world. This is a miserable world. With the strength of his realisation he can make improvement in his progress to the immortal plane.

As proof positive comes before us we shall feel sure, "Now I see these things and hear these things, and this experience is all more real than the world about me. The world is vague, but what I now see and hear is more real than that."

A direct transaction is possible with the soul, with God, and with God's land. Where we are presently living is the plane of indirect transactions: first the eye, ear, etc. collect experience, then it goes to the mind before we can have experience of this world. But in the case of the soul, we can feel everything

directly ourselves without the help of any instrument.

Through a microscope we see one thing, and through the naked eye we see something else. There is a difference. Through the eye, ear, etc. we have some experience of this world, but concerning the soul, if we can withdraw from the "progress" in the negative side, we shall be able to feel, "Oh! *This* is the nature of the soul." We shall directly feel who we are without the help of any instrument.

The soul can see itself, it can focus upon itself and through introspection he will realise his very nature. Through the process of introspection the soul, without the help of any other instrument, will percieve all possible conceptions of himself directly. He will then understand his own soil: he will gain the conception of a higher type of soil. On that positive side he will discover: "I do not die."

The material plane is the plane of misrepresentation and misunderstanding, but in the higher plane there is no misunderstanding. Once admitted there, our conception, though it may be partial, will be clear and true. Anyone having that experience will be convinced and he will be determined to go forwards.

Through introspection the soul will gain the conception of a higher type of soil of immortality

Socrates could feel that the soul was immortal. He was so intense with his feeling that he did not give any value to his own life in this mundane world. He neglectfully disconnected himself from this world because with great conviction he knew the soul to be immortal. Christ also was so much convinced of his Lord that he did not give any care for the happiness and pleasures of this world: he neglectfully rejected it all.

With deep vision we can see in a different, more hopeful way

There are many things invisible to this fleshy eye that are visible with the eye of knowledge. We can concede that the eye of knowledge can see many things which the fleshy eye cannot. Similarly a deep vision exists by which we can see things in a different, more hopeful way: "Come and see!" An eye cannot see when it is covered by a cataract, but when the cataract is removed the eye can see. Ignorance is like a cataract in our eye that causes us blindness. Our vision is only superficial, but deeper vision can see many things. This eye backed by the eye of knowledge can see many things—deeper and deeper.

Our apparent sight has no value. Real value is present in the seer who can see with deeper vision. And all are not equal: there are the wise, the wiser, the even wiser… There is gradation, and according to his capacity the seer will see.

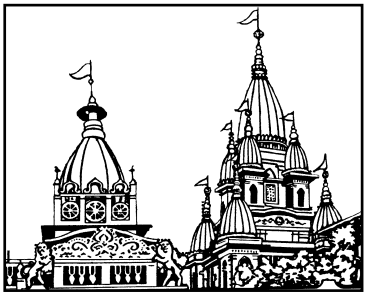
It is easy to see that at present we are members of this mortal world, but by what are we connected? It is our body that is the member. If we can go above the body we can go to the mind, then on to the intelligence, then to the soul. We will find that the plane where the souls live is eternal, and the soul itself is also eternal. From there we can go on to search after the Supersoul, the origin of all our thoughts. The Supersoul is likened to the sun which is the origin of all rays of light. Once we find a ray of light we can approach the sun from which all rays emanate. Similarly, from the conception of our own selves, knowing ourselves to be particles of consciousness, we can search out a plane of super-consciousness, super-knowledge, and super-existence. In this way we can progress to the ultimate cause, the source of all. But we cannot go just according to our own whim

and freedom, some sort of help from that plane is indispensably necessary. Such help comes in the form of Guru, the *Vaiṣṇavas*, and other agents of that land. With their help we can make honest progress towards the goal.

At present we are as if monarchs of all we survey, but what we survey is all transient, mortal, and reactionary. If we look scrutinisingly we will see it is all reactionary. What is pleasing today, will later on turn into pain, therefore we must seek a good position somewhere else, a good place to build our home elsewhere. In the course of that search we will find that we do have our own home, and it is all-perfect.

"Home. Back to God, back to home—sweet, sweet, home." This sort of feeling we shall find within us if we are fortunate to be allowed a little participation by the grace of the canvassers of that land: the agents of the Lord. We shall be taken to that proper soil and we shall gain some solid familiar type of conception of what our real home is like. In this way we shall progress to that side.

In the beginning we may think that we shall be going to some unknown quarter: "Innumerable living entities are here around me in my present



In the course of our search we will find that we do have our own home, and it is all-perfect

world, but where I am now trying to go, that is uncertain. It seems imaginary and abstract." However when we begin our journey we will gradually find that almost all existence is in *that* side, the side where all are truthful. We shall find that this material side is very meagre and limited, and here there is only a tiny representation of the truth.

From here we may think that most of the existence is here and only a very few special souls go

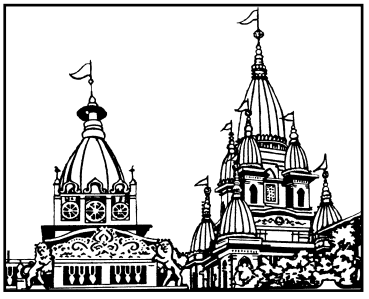
The agents of divinity, come to give us news of our homeland: the land of eternal nectar

from here to the immortal world such as Socrates, Muhammad, Buddha, etc. But gradually we will come to understand that the higher world is infinitely greater than the mundane portion we see here. We will gradually come to understand that as in a country a few people are confined in a hospital or a prison and are suffering, similarly a few persons are here in this mundane plane as punishment. As this becomes clearer to us we shall feel more courage to proceed, and with greater speed will shall run towards our home. Let us go home, and the nearer we are to home, our speed will increase more and more, "Oh. *This* is my homeland!"

At present we are outside and our mind is also focused outside. We are helplessly moving. Our hope lies only in the grace of the divine agents. They come to pick us up and warn us, "What are you doing? Don't go on that side. It is the land of danger, the land of death. Come along with me. I shall take you to the land of eternal nectar." Those agents come to arouse us from our slumber, our ignorant madness. They are the *Vaiṣṇavas,* and they have also given the Scriptures which give some history of the land outside and of the saints who have gone there. Through the Scriptures our faith will gradually develop and we will increasingly keep association with the *sādhus.* In so doing we shall make ever quicker progress.

One's own feeling is the guarantee as to whether he is making real progress or not. *Hṛdayeṇābhyanujñāto.* He will receive approval from his own heart that he is making real progress. Otherwise, a man may be coaxingly taken in a

particular direction only to feel frustration after some time, but such a transaction is not genuine—it is false, a hoax. In the name of religion so many such things do go on, like a trade, but that does not mean that real realisation and real emancipation do not exist. *Hṛdayeṇābhyanujñāto*—the ultimate guarantee is the approval of your own heart, "Yes. Really this is what I want. From the innermost core of my heart I feel the desire to dance to find that such progress is possible."



PART THREE

Normally in this world we are men of action, men who exploit the environment and nature in order to gather energy. Always there is the attempt to collect more and more energy to use at our command, and to save something so it may be utilised in the time of necessity. In general, that is the very nature of those who live here. And if any hindrance will come in that attempt then it is considered that those circumstances are very bad because they oppose the object of life here, which is to collect more energy. However, to remind us about the importance of the inner wealth we are advised that the outer nature cannot do as much harm to us as our internal nature can do in its apathy to collect more wealth for the inner existence:

Find your inner self and the inner world within where the inner self is living. Try to find that home

the man within. We are to be mindful of this point: what comes from outside is not so important—it all comes and goes. Even the body which is at present the centre of our thoughts will vanish, therefore what is the necessity of collecting so much energy in connection with this body? Awaken from within your soul the proper man within you. Try to find him and try to collect help for him. This campaign is possible only with the connection of the *sādhu*, the saint.

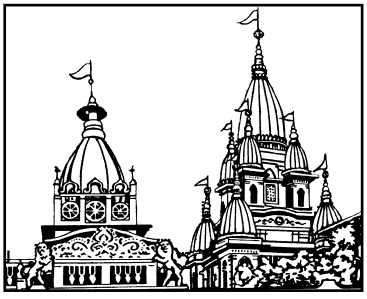
We shall be the loser on any day in which we do not meet with a saint, and hear any discussion about the inner meaning and substance of life. Be conscious of this. In all respects and anyhow, be mindful of your own person. Look after your own interest by finding your own self. Be unmindful towards the external world and circumstances and dive deep into the reality, your inner wealth. Find your inner self and the inner world within where your inner self is living. Try to find that home. Back to God, back to home. Utilise your energy only for going home, and not for wandering into the land of others: the land of death. Try to avoid the land of death at any cost, and always try to find out the eternal soil. You are to find out that you are a member of that soil. Try to understand what is your home, and why that is your home. What does *home comfort* mean? It means it is the natural place which is our birth-right. We have to face the fact that we are not at home. But if there is some hankering within us to search for that, we are fortunate.

Our necessity is to find how that inner thirst can be quenched. Our feeling should

be: "The world is here and I am here, but I am unsatisfied. How can my inner self be satisfied." We are in want, therefore by what process can this want be removed? For the present we have this fleshy body, but to know anything and everything about the body—about the bones, nervous system, blood, etc.—is all unnecessary. To know about the composition of the blood, etc. is just unnecessary detail. Our enquiry should be regulated in this way: "Who am I, and why am I troubled? I do not know how to rid myself of these problems." This is the general question and we are to be concerned with that.

"*Athāto brahma-jijñāsā*—from where have I come? How am I living, and what is my future?" These are the main questions that should concern us, and we must concentrate the whole of our energy to find the solution. This does not only apply to just one person—myself—but this is the concern of all creation.

To seek the source of everything is the nature of proper enquiry, but to enquire after this and that and so many hundreds of things is simply a waste of energy. The *śāstric* (Scriptural) enquiry has been couched in such a way: "From where have I come? What sustains me? What is my future?



From where have I come? How am I living, and what is my future?

Why am I uneasy, and how can I acquire my inner fulfilment?" All enquiry should follow this standard way, otherwise there is some disease of enquiry: it won't be proper enquiry. More and more curiosity may arise without end, therefore we must learn how to question, how to enquire, and in that way our energy will have some value and won't be wasted.

Enquiry is bona fide when it is directed towards how to fulfil the real goal, therefore we are to save our energy and regulate it in the proper channel. This is *Kali-yuga*—the age of

In one word the solution lies in "sādhu-saṅga," associating with the saints

quarrel—and our real and only helpful necessity in life is the company of the established saints and the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa—*sādhu-saṅge kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Otherwise, deviating from that, we may be misguided at any and every step.

sādhu-saṅge kṛṣṇa-nāma ei mātra cāi
saṁsāra jinite āra kona vastu nāi

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave this as the substance of all advice, and there is nothing more useful than this to help us get out of undesirability.

He says that to chant *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* but without the association of the *sādhus* also means that it will be very difficult for us to proceed. Therefore in one word the solution is in *sādhu-saṅga*. We are to secure the company of a standard realised soul, then everything will fall into place, and the king of the *sādhus* is the Guru. Gurudeva is the king of the the good-men who can give guidance. For one to be Guru it means that he can guide us satisfactorily, otherwise whom can we believe and trust to our utmost understanding, and to whom can we fully submit and surrender? The Guru is where our enquiry will be fulfilled to its utmost necessity. From him higher direction will come from above, from a more and more elevated sphere of love. We are to connect with that high and subtlemost wave and we will be more benefitted. This is the general idea.

On the whole, we are to try to always be at the disposal of the higher agency, at the disposal of the higher thinkers of the higher provinces. In that way we shall come in connection with the higher and most subtle layer of life. There are different waves of different types and interests, and of different loss and gain, but to connect with the highest should be our aim.

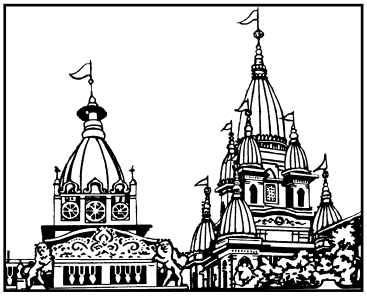
We are to see that the charm of this life is finished. Already we have had good experience that this is all stale. After all, wherever there are the four enemies, *janma, mṛtyu, jarā, vyādhi*—birth, death, old age, and disease, there cannot be any real happiness. Wherever there is death there cannot be any happiness. In such a plane we are always under the threat of death, so there is no charm: all charm is completely finished. Therefore, with eagerness we must make enquiry as to where we shall be able to live. We must select a higher plane where we can really live.

yad gatvā na nivartante,
tad dhāma paramaṁ mama
(Bg. 15.6)

In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, "The place from which there is no returning to this deathly plane is My supreme abode."

ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ,
punar āvartino 'rjjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya,
punar janma na vidyate
(Bg. 8.16)

He instructs Arjjuna, "A permanent position is only possible in My plane. All occupations in this plane, even that of a king, are all just as in a dream. So if you want to get out of this dreaming life and enter into reality then raise yourself to the



Raise yourself to the standard of finding the plane of reality… it cannot be devoured by death

standard of finding the plane of reality, however subtle it may be, for that cannot be devoured by death. Collect your energy to build up something permanent. At present you are investing your energy in something that is going to be demolished at the next moment—a foolish attempt."

uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ,
nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur,
ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ
(Bg. 6.5)

Be your own friend: none can give as much help to you as you, yourself, can do

"Note that you are your own friend. But you are your own enemy also. You are your own enemy if you don't take good care of your own development for your real progress. But you can be your own friend, and none can give as much help to you as you, yourself, can do."

bandhur ātmātmanas tasya,
yenaivātmātmanā jitaḥ
(Bg. 6.6)

"If at all you can have any self-control then collect your energy from going astray and direct it to the proper channel where you can really thrive, and then you will be your real friend. However, if you allow yourself to be led by the various senses of lower nature which are always trying to move in the land of exploitation, reaction, and suffering then you are your own enemy. Consider all these things."

vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa,
yathecchasi tathā kuru
(Bg. 18.63)

"Consider and consider deeply, then take the right step as to what to do." The human life is very valuable. You have the power of discrimination, but that will be denied you if, compelled by the reactionary wave, you have to go into the body of a tree, a beast, or wherever. Can you say for certain that in your next life you will not be degraded into an animal body? What guarantee is there that you won't be?

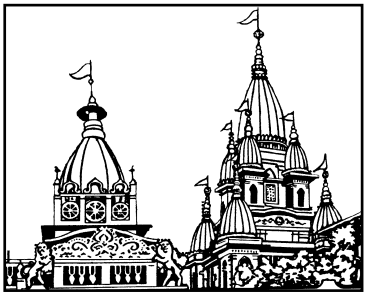
It is not that all action and all progress takes place only in the realm of death. Progress is not limited just to darkness and ignorance, but if you really participate in positive progress you will be able to feel what real progress is. *Hṛdayeṇābhyanujñāto*—you will feel and conceive the progress with your inner approval, your heart's approval. It is not that some bogus hope has been given and

you will be taken into a foreign land to be murdered, tortured, mistreated, etc. There is no question of that.

bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir
anyatra caiṣa trika eka-kālaḥ
prapadyamānasya yathāśnataḥ syus
tuṣṭiḥ puṣṭiḥ kṣud-apāyo 'nu-ghāsam
(Bhā: 11.2.42)

This famous *śloka* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains that when you eat something, your belly will give witness. It will say, "Yes I am eating." Hunger will be satisfied, the body nourished, and there will be the fulfilment of having been fed. The body will be nourished and will gain strength, and, along with all this, will be your own inner approval of having eaten. Furthermore there will be no longer any feeling of necessity to eat more and more. Similarly in spiritual life so many symptoms will come to give proof of your progress.

We now have a human body, and this is the most valuable time for us, but it is being lost due to misapplication. Our most valuable energy is being lost through misappropriation. *Uttiṣṭhataḥ jāgrataḥ prapyo varān nibodhataḥ*—so, awake, arise, and engage yourself not only for you, but address others also to engage in this campaign, and that in turn will give you further help in a particular way.



In spiritual life so many symptoms will come to give proof of your progress

The main thing is that under the guidance of a higher agent we should engage ourselves in devotional activities and have a busy programme so there may not be any spare time to go on with any trifling mundane matters. Such a busy programme in the association of the devotees will be very helpful for us.

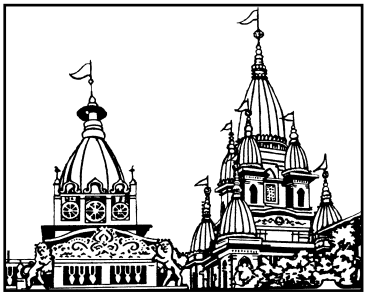
PART FOUR

Internal self-satisfaction, to disregard the present environment of the troublesome world, is a valuable asset. It is nearing the soul area. Real *bhakti,* devotion, is *ahaitukī*, causeless; it is its own cause. It is causeless and it is by itself. As Hegel said, reality is by itself. Reality is not an abstract thing, but reality means a system, a system that exists by itself. It is *anādi* and *ahaitukī,* it is eternal, and nothing can produce it. *Bhakti* is its own cause. These are the definitions that have been given to help us to understand what is *bhakti.* It is not created by some other thing, it is there eternally, but it is only covered and should be uncovered, discovered. It is there in a potential form. By outside help it will gradually and progressively come out: it is as if sleeping—it is necessary to rouse it. *Anyābhilāṣa, karmma, jñāna*—fleeting desires, and the organised attempts for both exploitation and retirement or indifference, are the covers. We have to remove these covers and then *bhakti* will emerge in all its pristine glory.

To have affinity and attraction towards the higher truth is very rarely found, especially in this modern age where the direction of thought is all towards exploitation, even of knowledge. Knowledge being also subservient to exploitation is creating havoc. Atomic energy and so many other kinds of scientific research are the cause of great apprehension: the world is threatened with destruction at any moment. This scientific knowledge has brought us to such a position that at any moment the whole thing may be finished! This knowledge is suicidal. The increase of such knowledge in this world means the result is that we are going to commit suicide. Exploitation means reaction. So, if we are to accept general, wholesale, exploitation then the result will be *pralaya, mahā-pralaya,* destruction—wholesale. In any way, whether by the atomic bomb or by any other natural incident, the *pralaya* will come,

and after that, again creation: birth and death, birth and death… Each individual will be born and die again, and the whole solar system will also be born and will die again and again without end.

If we are to get out of this entanglement, we must leave this atmosphere experienced by our senses. In *Bhagavad-gītā* and in the *Upaniṣads* also it is mentioned, *indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur.* Our senses hold the principle position, because if the eye, ear, nose, touch, etc. are gone, then the whole world is gone from us. Because we have senses we have our world. In the world of experience, our senses are all-important. Then—*indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ*—the mind is within. And what is the mind? It is the faculty within us which selects, "I want this, I don't want that." We have a liking for something, and a disregard for something else, and this is the principle of the mind within us. It is more important than the senses because if I am unmindful, a person may walk in front of me but it is possible that I will say, "Oh, I did not notice him. I did not see him and I could not hear him. I was unmindful." So, mind is in the centre, and that is more important than our senses.



Because we have senses we have our world, but higher is the mind

The senses are more important than the external world, and the mind is more important because if the mind does not receive, then the senses, which are like so many doors, are useless. Then—*manasas tu parā buddhir*—there is another principle to be traced within us, a fine thing called reason, *buddhi,* and what is its characteristic? The mind will say, "Oh, I shall take that," but *buddhi* says, "Oh no. No, don't take that, it will cause some damage. You rather take this, it will give you benefit." That faculty of selection, that reason, is a higher principle in us.

The soul is like a particle of light and there is a land of light made of souls

Then—*buddher yaḥ paratas tu saḥ*—that which is superior even to the intelligence is the soul himself.

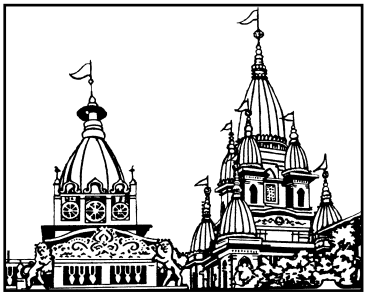
In this way we are to trace out the elements. More important than the external world are our senses; more important than our senses is our mind; and above the mind is reason which is even more important, more fine and more reliable; and—*buddher yaḥ paratas tu saḥ*—there is another thing above the *buddhi,* and that is our soul. And what is its nature, its characteristic? It is like light.

In the Scriptures an example has been given that on a moonlit night there may be a cloud in the sky which has covered the moon—but the cloud is seen by the light of the moon. The compiler of the Vedas, Vyāsadeva, says the *ātmā* is like that illuminating moon. Or, like the sun: a cloud has covered the sun, but the cloud is seen by the light of the sun. Similarly, the *ātmā* is a point of light within us, and because it is in the background we can feel our mental system. If the light is withdrawn, then everything is dead. The mental system, the intelligence, the faculty of choice, and so many channels through which we gain knowledge from outside, will have no value if that light is withdrawn. That light is the *ātmā,* a point of a ray of light, and it is quite categorically different from all other things here. The soul is a particle of light and there is a land of light made of souls, and in this way there is development again: from the subjective to supersubjective, from soul to Supersoul, *ātmā* to *Paramātmā.* Just as in this world we find ether, air, heat, water, then earth, then stone, and in this way there is development in material existence, similarly in the finer

world there is also development: from the intelligence to the soul, then to the Supersoul, to the Super-supersoul... In this way the subjective side goes towards the infinite. It is super-subjective.

Darwin in his theory of evolution says that everything comes from matter. He says that even within the womb, first there is something material which grows, and from that growth of matter, knowledge also gradually grows. In general terms he thinks that consciousness comes out of matter. But the followers of the revealed truth do not believe in that. They say that consciousness is all in all, and everything is floating on the ocean of consciousness. That is subjective evolution. Darwin talks of objective evolution, but the Vedic Scriptures say that everything comes under the category of subjective evolution. As Bishop Berkeley, one European philosopher said, "It is not that the mind is in the world, but the world is in the mind." Everything is floating in the plane of consciousness. Consciousness presupposes everything.

Darwin's section say that in the beginning was the fossil. But what is a fossil? A fossil means a particular conception,



Everything floats in the plane of consciousness. Consciousness presupposes everything

and that is a part of consciousness. Therefore, we contend that consciousness is the most original subject. Whatever you may say to be the beginning, before that, consciousness existed, otherwise you cannot give any statement about anything. So, the Vedic truth states that Brahman—the all-pervading impersonal aspect of the Absolute—is the source of the souls, and above the soul, *ātmā,* is the Supersoul, *Paramātmā.* In the mundane

March on, march forward towards the central truth, for this human life gives the best opportunity

worlds all development is in the black side, but there is also a bright side: the eternal world, which exists with so many joyful activities—so many waves in the ocean of blissfulness and joy.

In this way we are to understand what should be our duty in this life, what is the special importance of the human life, and how to utilise that. There are so many religious opinions, but we seekers after truth shall have to find a harmonising solution amongst them, and for that we are to enter into some comparative study.

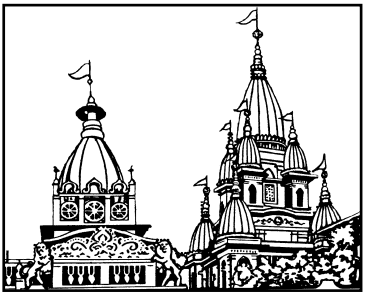
It is mentioned in the Scriptures that we should not change our position very easily. For example a commander will say to his army, "Don't change your position. Rather, die to keep it." But when the chance will come, he will say, "Go forward." Similarly, the *śāstra,* the Scriptures, have told, "Wherever you are born according to your previous *karmma,* wherever you have taken your stand, don't try to leave there otherwise there is the possibility you will go down." But at the same time, when a proper chance comes, they say, "March on towards the Absolute! Make further progress." So, in *Bhagavad-gītā* it is given, "Don't easily lose your present position acquired by your previous action—rather, die there!" But then again, Kṛṣṇa comes to say:

sarvva-dharmmān parityajya,
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja

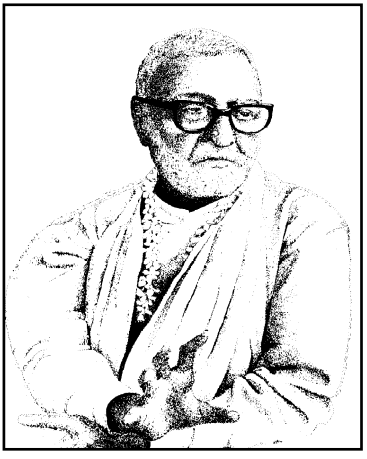
"When you get the chance of marching towards the Centre, you must do it at all cost." This is the revolutionary method. There is the constitutional method and the revolutionary method. The revolutionary method is to take the risk of anything and every-

thing and march on, march forward towards the central truth, and, because this human life gives the best opportunity, we shall do whatever is necessary for that.

Only in the human life do you practically have the use of your discrimination and decision. If you lose this position and go to animal life or vegetable life, no one knows when you will again come back to be able to take independent and voluntary decision. Therefore this human life is most important and you should not misuse it only in the practices of animal life: *āhāra, nidrā, bhaya, maithuna*—to eat, to sleep, to be under apprehension at every minute, and to have sense pleasure, because this you will get everywhere. If you will become an animal or go anywhere else—to become a bird, a worm, an insect, etc.—you will get all these enjoyments, but to culture about your soul, about religion, about your proper function, that chance you will not get anywhere else other than in the human form of life. In the company of the saints the entire position may be discussed, in this way you can make progress in your life and save yourself. But if having received a human birth, you lose this chance, you are committing suicide, or even more than that! One commits suicide who having received the chance of a human birth does not try to help himself properly, to try for his wholesale relief.



Don't commit suicide— make progress and save yourself



PART FIVE

Śrī Guru and His Grace

The following essay by Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj was originally published in 1934 in *The Harmonist.*

To err is human. To err is inevitable for all, being not perfect. Still, no one wants to remain imperfect. There is an element within all that is animate that tends towards perfection. If it were not so, we would feel no want at all. Our tendency towards perfection is certainly very weak and limited; otherwise we could attain the goal at once. Our limited capacity and tendency for perfection makes room for the guide or *Guru.*

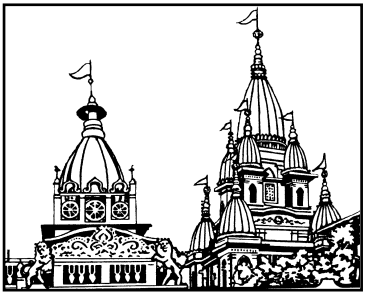
The imperfect is not so if it is not in need of help, and that also from beyond itself. The perfect is not perfect if He cannot assert Himself or help others, and that too, of His own accord. So the guidance to perfection or Absolute Truth is necessarily a function of the Absolute Himself, and the divine agent through whom this function manifests is *Śrī Guru* or the divine guide.

For a seeker of the Absolute Truth, submission to the *Guru* is unavoidable. A class of thinkers believes, however, that when scientific research is possible, why cannot higher spiritual knowledge also be evolved from within? Such people are ignorant of the most essential nature of absolute Knowledge, that He alone is the Absolute Subject and all else including ourselves constitutionally stand only as an object to His omniscient vision. It is impossible for the eye to see the mind; it can have some connection with the mind only when the latter cares to mind it. In a similar way, our connection with absolute knowledge depends mainly on His sweet will. We must solely

depend on His agent, or the spiritual master, through whom He likes to distribute Himself.

Our human society with its finest culture forms but an infinitesimal part of the dynamic absolute. How, except by the direct and positive method of revelation, dare we hope to comprehend or evolve any conception of the supernatural knowledge of the unconditioned infinite? All intellectual giants prove themselves but pygmies before the absolute omniscient omnipotence who reserves the right to give Himself away through His own agents alone.

To our best knowledge and sincerity, however, we should see not to submit to a false agent. Here of course, we can't help ourselves very much; because in our present state we are mainly guided by our previous *saṁskāra* or acquired nature. "Birds of the same feather flock together." Yet, although we are generally overpowered by habit, there is still the possibility of free choice to a certain extent, specially in the human species, otherwise correction becomes impossible, and punishment mere vengeance. Reality can assert itself. Light does not require darkness for its positive proof. The sun by itself can establish



The real guide shines above all professors of phenomenon

its supremacy over all other lights. Before an open and unbiased eye, the *sad Guru* (real guide) shines above all professors of phenomenon.

Śrī Guru manifests himself mainly in a twofold way — as the director from within and the preceptor from without. Both functions of the absolute help an individual soul — a disciple — to reach the absolute goal. In our fallen state we cannot catch the proper direction of the inner guide, so the merciful manifestation of the preceptor without is our sole help and hope. But at the same time it is

The constant and really wholesome relationship for the soul

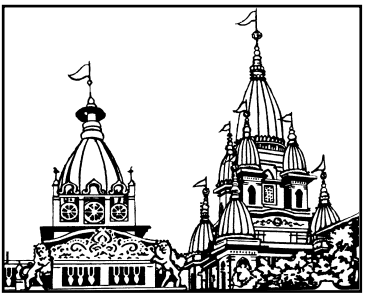
only by the grace of the *Guru* within that we can recognize the real preceptor without and submit to his holy feet.

A *bona fide* disciple must always remain fully awake to the fact that his highest spiritual fortune is but a gracious grant from the Absolute Lord, and not a matter of right to be demanded or fought out. Constitutionally, we are equipped only to be proper recipients of God's favour. In this connection it should be clearly understood that an individual soul can never be substantially the same as the Absolute Person. Not even in his liberated or fully realized condition can an individual soul be one with Godhead. The misconception of one-ness has been introduced from the slothful non-discrimination of the Absolute Personality from the luminous orb around His eternal, spiritual, and blissful home. In fact, an individual soul constitutes only a part of a particular power of intermediate value of the Supreme Lord, and as such he is capable of being converted from both sides. He differs from the Absolute Entity both in quantity and quality, and is merely a dependent entity on the absolute. In other words, the Absolute Lord Kṛṣṇa is the master, and an individual *jīva* soul is His constitutional subordinate or servant.

Such a relationship is constant and really wholesome for the *jīva*. The apprehension of slavery does not arise because of his free choice and immense positive gain. The freedom and individuality of the *jīva* are not only unharmed by surrender to the Absolute Good, but they really thrive in Him alone. Individual freedom and interest are the part and parcel of those who are of the absolute, and so they are quite at home there, as a fish is at home in water or an

animal in a healthy atmosphere. But the freedom as well as all other qualities of the Supreme Personality are unlimited and transcendental, and so only by their partial functions they harmonize all relative entities.

Śrī Guru is not exclusively the same as the Supreme Lord Himself, but he fully represents the essence of the whole normal potency and embodies the most comprehensive and excellent service and favour of the Lord. As he is the fittest servitor of the Lord, he is empowered by the Lord to reinstate all misguided souls to their best interest. So, *Guru* is the divine messenger of immortal hope and joy in this mortal and miserable world. His advent is the most auspicious and happy event to the suffering animation, and can be compared to the rising of the morning star that can guide the traveller lost in the desert. A gentle touch of *Śrī Guru's* merciful hand can wipe off the incessant tears from all weeping eyes. A patriot or philanthropist makes the problem only worse in his frantic and futile attempt to alleviate the deep-rooted pain of a suffering soul, as an ignorant doctor does in eagerly handling an unfortunate patient. Oh the day when this poor soul realizes the causeless grace of *Śrī Gurudeva.*



Śrī Guru's *hand can wipe off the incessant tears from all weeping eyes*

Abbreviations

Bg.: — Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā
Bhā: — Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Kṛṣṇa said: "Why did you stay away? Why have you been living away from home for so long? How was it possible for you? How could you bear My separation? You left Me, and you have been passing lives after lives without Me. Still I know what trouble you took to return to Me. You searched for Me everywhere, and went to beg from house to house, and you were chastised by many, ridiculed by many, and you shed tears for Me. I know all these things. I was with you. And now, after great trouble, you have again come back to Me."

—"Loving Search for the Lost Servant"
by Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj

Publications

(A selection of English editions)

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Please consider:

"The outer nature cannot do as much harm to us as our inner nature can do in its apathy to collect more wealth for the inner existence: the man within."

"The nature of the progressive substance is eternal existence, knowledge, and beauty. The one harmonising organic whole contains all similarities and differences, held inconceivably in the hand of the Absolute. And there is no anarchy in the absolute power. Nonetheless, mercy is found to be above justice. Above judiciousness, the supreme position is held by love, sympathy, and beauty: 'I am the absolute power, but I am friendly to you all. Knowing this, you need never fear *(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gita 5.29).*' This revelation relieves us of all apprehension: we are not victims of a chaotic environment, but it is judicious, considerate—and the ultimate dispenser is our friend."

—*"Positive and Progressive Immortality"*
by Swami B.R. Sridhar

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